

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 13044 111203Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3008

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 13044

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: PSI SECRETARY DEMARTINO INTERESTED IN VISITING U.S.

SUMMARY: IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR, SOCIALIST (PSI) PARTY SECRETARY DEMARTINO CONFIRMED REPORTS FROM EMBASSY SOURCES THAT HE WOULD ACCEPT AN INFORMAL INVITATION TO VISIT THE U.S. WHICH WOULD ALLOW HIM TO HAVE HIGH-LEVEL TALKS IN WASHINGTON. INTEREST IS PROMPTED BY CONCERN THAT COMMUNISTS (PSI) MIGHT REPLACE PSI AS INTERLOCUTOR WITH U.S., AND WISH TO REBUILD PSI'S IMAGE OF AUTONOMY VIS-A-VIS THE PCI. VISIT WOULD LAST ABOUT A WEEK AND TAKE PLACE IN LATE OCTOBER OR NOVEMBER. AMBASSADOR STRONGLY SUPPORTS PROPOSAL FOR REASON GIVEN IN TEXT. END SUMMARY.

1. IN LIGHT OF PERSISTANT REPORTS FROM EMBASSY CONTACTS THAT SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY DEMARTINO WAS INTERESTED IN VISITING U.S. THIS FALL, I HAD HIM TO LUNCH TO DETERMINE HIS INTENTIONS. DEMARTINO IS INDEED INTERESTED IN GOING TO U.S., AND WOULD WELCOME AN INVITATION.

2. HE WOULD LIKE TO VISIT FOR ABOUT A WEEK IN OCTOBER OR NOVEMBER, "IN ORDER TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN HIS PARTY'S VIEWPOINT DIRECTLY TO DEPARTMENT." HE UNDERSTANDS THAT AN OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT INVITATION WOULD BE OUT OF THE QUESTION, AND WOULD ACCEPT AN INVITATION
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PAGE 02 ROME 13044 111203Z

FROM A PRESITGIOUS UNIVERSITY OR INSITUTE. DEMARTINO

IS A PROFESSOR OF LAW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES AND MIGHT REEASONABLY BE INVITED TO A LAW SEMINAR OR CONFERENCE. (HE EXCLUDES HOWEVER "PRETEXTS" FOR A VISIT SUCH AS HIS WIFE'S HEALTH.) HE STIPULATES ONLY A PROGRAM IN KEEPING WITH HIS POSITION, AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS IN WASHINGTON TO EXPLAIN HIS PARTY'S VIEWPOINT. I WELCOMED HIS INTEREST AND TOLD HIM I WOULD REFER THE MATTER TO THE DEPARTMENT.

3. DEMARTINO'S INTEREST, AS SOCIALIAST SOURCES HAVE CONFIRMED, IS INSPIRED BY THE CONCERN THAT THE COMMUNISTS MAY REPLACE THE SOCIALISTS AS THE INTERLOCUTOR OF THE ITALIAN LEFT WITH THE U.S. WE UNDERSTAND THAT NENNI, AMONG OTHERS, HAS URGED HIM TO GO FOR THIS REASON. IN THEIR EYES A VISIT WOULD ALSO PROMOTE THE NEED INCREASINGLY FELT NOW BY MANY IN THE PSI TO REBUILD ITS IMAGE AS CREDIBLE AUTONOMOUS FORCE VIS-A-VIS THE COMMUNISTS.

4. I STRONGLY URGE THE DEPARTMENT TO ARRANGE THE VISIT. REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE SOCIALISTS IN THE END REMAIN ALLIED WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC) OR RETURN TO A LEFT FRONT WITH THE COMMUNISTS, THE VISIT IS IN THE U.S. INTEREST. ON THE ONE HAND, IT WOULD PROMOTE CURRENT DC EFFORTS TO REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH THE PSI (DC CONTACTS HAVE URGED ME TO INVITE DEMARTINO). IN THE LATTER EVENT, IT WOULD HELP MAINTAIN OUR TIES WITH THE PSI AND FACILITATE SUPPORT OF ITS EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN AUTONOMY FROM THE PCI WITHIN THE LEFT.

5. VISIT, CONTRASTED WITH REFUSAL OF VISAS TO PCI NOTABLES, WOULD ALSO STRENGTHEN CREDIBILITY OF OUR OPPOSITION TO PCI, AND WOULD GIVE DEPARTMENT OPPORTUNITY TO ASSESS DIRECTLY FUTURE OF PSI IN ITALIAN POLITICS.

6. MAJOR POTENTIAL DISADVANTE WOULD BE ITS POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION BY ITALIAN PUBLIC OPINION AS A MISSION TO MDEIATE ON BEHALF OF THE PCI. IF VISIT IS PROPERLY HANDLED, THIS IMPRESSION CAN BE AVOIDED.

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PAGE 03 ROME 13044 111203Z

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